
Norman Spivey

29th June 1931 – 10th February 2023

Audrey, Julie and I thank you for joining us as we celebrate the life of my father, Norman Spivey. We came in to a jazz tune chosen by Norman's grandson, George, who used to listen to Benny Goodman with Norman while driving to and from college. Later, grandson Jamie will read a poem that we found with Norman's things after he died: it perfectly sums up his approach to life.

I hope you will also join us for some refreshments afterwards, when there will be time to talk of the many things Norman did, the things he enjoyed, and the love and enjoyment he gave to others. Right now there is time only to touch on those things that we cannot go without mentioning somehow.

The Leeds and Bradford years are a mystery to me, and if you want to know about Norman's exploits with the Shipley Mouse Fancier's Club, you'll have to ask Paul. I do know, though, about his enthusiasms for hockey, through which his nose acquired its distinguished profile, and for tennis, through which he met Audrey.

Norman trained as a teacher at St Mark and St John College in Chelsea. It's hard to imagine Norman there: straightforward, honest, practical, serious-minded – there's nobody less like the cast of *Made in Chelsea*! Soon afterwards came marriage to Audrey – a marriage that would last more than 65 years – and before too long I and then Julie arrived. Norman was particularly happy to get a job as head of Maths at Park Grove school, because it meant he could walk home for lunch, so we all saw a lot of him every day.

An early and continuing interest was amateur radio, something he was introduced to by his uncle George. Norman's interest was in designing his own sets and building them, partly with valves and other components recycled from war surplus equipment. Microphones he viewed as a needless complication, so for Norman it was Morse code all the way. If you google his callsign, G3GWI, you can still find articles he wrote about the simple but effective radios he designed.

Norman always felt the lack of a university degree, having trained as a teacher in two years instead of the usual three, so as soon as the Open University began, his application for a Maths and Science degree went in. Science courses required experimental work, so a succession of cardboard boxes with exciting contents started to come in the post, and Norman discovered that he had in me a keen lab assistant already on the premises.

2 *Norman Spivey*

Later Norman's interest moved on from radio to computer programming. At first, he put his skills to good use by making programs that would produce a fanfare of silly noises each time a pupil worked out a multiplication sum: a simple but effective way of keeping them motivated, and something George enjoyed too. After retiring from teaching, Norman started a temporary job that expanded into a second career, helping economists at the University of York run experiments on computers.

I should mention Norman's love of gardening, where his ideal was to grow perfect specimens of different types of heathers and dwarf conifers, though he could grow flowers too, and the garden was rarely without the makings of a pickled beetroot sandwich. Norman was proud to become part of a team at the Northern Horticultural Society in Harrogate engaged in systematic trials of new garden heathers, linking his enthusiasms for gardening, for science, and for being outdoors.

That brings me to the last of Norman's great loves: his grandchildren. I think the pictures in the order of service speak for themselves – Norman adored all five of his grandchildren, Jamie, George, Rosie, Jack and Tom, from the moment they were born until the last weeks of his life. And that reveals the most important truth about Norman: that in his own quiet, unassuming manner, he has loved and cared for all of us in a way that made us who we are.

I end with a hope and a prayer. My hope is that, in his final months, Norman knew how much we returned his love. Having seen his face light up when visitors came into his room, I am sure that he did.

My prayer is that Norman has now woken up in a new place, one where, free of pain and confusion, he can know the love that comes from beyond this world, a love that truly makes each of us who we are, and a love in which each of us will one day find our home.